

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of processing an electronically placed order, said method  
5 comprising the steps of:

a) receiving said electronically placed order, said order comprising a  
product configuration specified by a user;

b) determining whether said product configuration is a valid  
configuration, wherein valid product configurations are determined by a set of  
10 rules that change over time;

c) receiving an approval for said order; and

d) if less than a pre-determined period of time has expired between  
receiving said electronically placed order and receiving said approval for said  
order, automatically continuing the processing of said order.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein said step d) comprises the step of:

d1) continuing the processing of said order without determining  
whether said product configuration is valid.

3. The method of Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

e) if more than said pre-determined period of time has expired between  
receiving said electronically placed order and receiving said approval for said  
order, determining whether said product configuration is still valid; and

f) rejecting said order if said product configuration is invalid.

4. The method of Claim 1 wherein said pre-determined period of time is based on an expected amount of time for said order to be approved.

5 5. The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of:  
d) altering a parameter specifying said pre-determined period of time.

6. The method of Claim 1 wherein said electronically placed order further comprises fields for required order processing information.

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7. The method of Claim 6 further comprising the step of:  
d) determining whether all said required order processing information has been provided.

15 8. The method of Claim 6 further comprising the step of:  
d) determining whether all said required order processing information is valid.

9. The method of Claim 1 wherein said step a) comprises receiving said  
20 order via the Internet.

10. A method of expediting orders for configurable products, said method comprising the steps of:

a) receiving a user who is electronically transferred from an electronic procurement application to a web site operable to access an ordering application;

b) said ordering application allowing an electronically placed order for a configurable product to be created, said order comprising product configuration information and required order processing information, wherein a product in said order is configured according to user specification;

c) allowing said order to be further processed without determining whether said required order processing information is complete and valid;

d) transferring an electronic copy of said order from said ordering application to said electronic procurement application;

e) said ordering application receiving an approval for said order;

f) after said approval is received, determining whether said required order processing information is complete and valid; and

g) if less than a pre-determined period of time has expired between the time said order was placed and the time said order was approved, continuing the processing of said order.

11. The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:

a1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from a web site operable to access said electronic procurement application to said web site operable to access said ordering application.

12. The method of Claim 11 wherein said step e) comprises the step of:

e1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from said web site for said electronic procurement application to said web site for said ordering application.

13. The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:

a1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from a desktop computer that is running said electronic procurement application to said web site operable to access said ordering application.

14. The method of Claim 13 wherein said step e) comprises the step of:

e1) receiving said user who is electronically transferred from a desktop computer that is running said electronic procurement application to said web site operable to access said ordering application.

15. The method of Claim 10 wherein said step g) comprises the step of:

g1) continuing the processing of said order without determining whether said product configuration is valid.

16. The method of Claim 10 further comprising the step of:

h) if more than a pre-determined period of time has expired between the time the order was created and the time the order was approved, determining whether said product configuration is valid.

17. The method of Claim 10 wherein said step b) comprises the step of:  
b1) determining whether said product configuration is a valid  
configuration.

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18. The method of Claim 10 wherein said step d) comprises the step of:  
d1) transferring said electronic copy of said order via an electronic  
message which is substantially compliant with the Extensible Markup  
Language (XML).

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19. The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:  
a1) authenticating said user before allowing said user to place said  
order.

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20. The method of Claim 10 wherein said step a) comprises the step of:  
a1) receiving said user without requiring said user to provide a  
password and user identification.

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21. The method of Claim 20 wherein said step a1) comprises the step of  
authenticating said user by verifying a company identification.

22. The method of Claim 10 wherein said order further comprises service  
configuration information.

23. A computer readable medium having stored thereon program instructions for implementing a method for processing customer orders, said method comprising the steps of:

5 a) allowing the creation of an order for a configurable product, said order in incomplete form and comprising product configuration information and order processing information comprising a plurality of elements, wherein a product in said order is configured according to customer specification and at least one element of said plurality of elements is not provided by said user;

10 b) allowing said order to be further processed with at least one of said elements for said order processing information unspecified;

c) receiving said order electronically in complete form, wherein said at least one element is provided; and

15 d) after said complete order is received, determining whether said order processing information is valid.

24. The computer readable medium of Claim 23 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

20 e) if less than a pre-determined period of time has expired between the time said order was placed and the time said order was approved, automatically continuing the processing of said order.

25. The computer readable medium of Claim 23 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

e) determining whether optional order processing information is valid.

5 26. Means for automatically processing an electronically placed order, comprising:

a) means for allowing electronic creation of said order, wherein a product in said order is configured according to customer specification and said order comprises fields of required order processing information;

10 b) means for determining whether said product configuration is valid;

c) means for receiving an approval for said order from said customer;

d) means for determining whether said required order processing information is valid and complete; and

15 e) means for determining if more than a pre-determined period of time has expired between the time the order was created and the time the order was approved.

27. The means of Claim 26 further comprising means for determining whether said user has authorization to create said order.